

Remarks

The Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and reexamination of the above-identified patent application, as amended. Claims 1-8 and 10-20 are pending in this application upon entry of this Amendment. In this Amendment, the Applicant has amended claims 1-4, 6, 8, 10-13, and 17-20 and cancelled claim 9. No claims have been added in this Amendment. Of the pending claims, claims 1-2, 4, and 17-18 are independent claims.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office Action mailed August 24, 2006, the Examiner objected to claims 9-15 as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but indicated claims 9-15 would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including the limitations of the base and any intervening claims. Claim 9 depends directly from independent claim 4. Amended independent claim 4 includes the limitations of claim 9. Claims 5-8 and 10-15 depend from amended independent claim 4. Thus, claims 4-8 and 10-15 are in a condition for allowance.

Claim Rejections - 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Examiner rejected claims 1-8 and 16-20 (including independent claims 1-2, 4, and 17-18) under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,956,715 issued to Mueller et al. ("Mueller"). As indicated above, claims 4-8 and 10-15 are in a condition for allowance.

Amended independent claims 1-2 and 17-18 include limitations similar to the limitations set forth in claim 9. As such, amended independent claims 1-2 and 17-18 include limitations similar to limitations set forth in amended independent claim 4, which is in a condition for allowance. Claims 3 and 19-20 respectively depend from amended independent claims 2 and 18. Consequently, claims 1-3 and 17-20 are in a condition for allowance.

Accordingly, the Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration and withdraw of the rejection to the claims under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) by Mueller.

The Applicant has amended the claims in the manners described above in order to readily put this application into a condition for allowance. The Applicant does not agree with the 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) rejection by Mueller of the claims as originally filed and the Applicant reserves the right to prosecute identical or similar claims as originally filed in this application in any continuing application.

CONCLUSION

In summary, claims 1-8 and 9-20 presented herein meet the substantive requirements for patentability. The case is in appropriate condition for allowance. Accordingly, such action is respectfully requested.

If a telephone or video conference would expedite allowance or resolve any further questions, such a conference is invited at the convenience of the Examiner.

Respectfully submitted,
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